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ABSTRACT

The history of early childhood education is woven with inaccuracies in popular textbooks and biographies, common erroneous beliefs in the field, fantasies about the nature of the family in the late 1800s, and egregious prevarication--deliberately misleading statements in the field. For example, many fallacious beliefs are held concerning the nature of the Froebel kindergarten, Froebel's training, and the founding of the field of Home Economics. The perpetuation of these fallacious beliefs is sometimes due to inadequate research on the history of early childhood education. Examples of fantasies regarding families include kindergarten advocates' belief that they could transform families and communities through the music and games of their young children. Examples of deliberate misleading statements from the history of early childhood education include accounts of Froebel's deathbed statements and recent biographies of Bruno Bettelheim. Egregious prevarication is used as strategy for individual glorification and as an organizational tactic to bond group members together. The case of Elizabeth Peabody's introduction to Froebel's ideas and the origins of the Froebel kindergarten in the United States are fraught with such fantasies, fallacies, and egregious prevarications. Katharyn Whiteside Taylor's claim of opposition to parent cooperative nursery schools illustrates the use of egregious prevarication as an organizational tactic. The founding of the first parent-initiative cooperative nursery school is also an early education milestone surrounded by faulty beliefs. (Contains 57 references.) (KB)

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Fallacies, Phantasies, and Egregious Prevarications in ECE History

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Fallacies, Phantasies, and Egregious Prevarications in ECE History

Dorothy W. Hewes, Ph.D.,

In last year's History Seminar, participants discussed some of the errors that have permeated textbooks and popular biographies in our field. For example, it was pointed out that Maria Montessori was NOT the first woman to receive a medical degree in Italy, although she was the first at the University of Rome. Someone suggested that history is like that old game of Telephone, where a whispered message passed from one child to the next comes out sounding quite different from the original statement. Almost a hundred years ago, Nora Smith wrote that "In all education, and in kindergarten education in particular, there is too much using of John Brown's notes on John Smith's commentary on John Jones's translation of the original."[1] Some are due to errors in translation. Murray pointed out early in this century that "Froebel's translators have been altogether too fond of the word *symbolic*. The German words usually translated as *symbol* and *symbollic* are Sinnbild and Vorbild with their respective adjectives. After consiering innumerable passages in which these words occur, it seems plain that Froebel's meaning would often have been better expressed by *typical* or by *signficiant* and sometimes by *metaphorical*.[2] One revealing exercise is to compare several translations of Froebel's *Mutter und Kose-Lieder* or Mother Play book (with even the title showing variations). Beyond this, it appears that the distortions of historical fact have sometimes been deliberate, that "Fallacies, Phantasies, and Egregious Prevarications" are an effort to change future perceptions about an individual or an organization.

Questions about accuracy can enliven our historical studies. How did it come about that so many textbook authors have believed that Froebel advocated a rigidly dictated kindergarten curriculum? What led California kindergarten pioneer Emma Marwedel, in 1887, to dedicate a book entitled Conscious Motherhood to "Miss Elizabeth Peabody, professor of educational science at John Hopkins University and at Harvard

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[1] Nora A. Smith. Child ren of the Future. Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1900. p 118

[2] Elsie R. Murray. Froebel as a Pioneer in Modern Psychology. Warwick & York, 1914. p 189

University" when Peabody had neither attended nor taught in any college or university? What was the real story behind the International Kindergarten Union's Committee of Nineteen? How did it happen that Katharine Whiteside Taylor has been credited with founding the first parent cooperative nursery school in the nation, when her first involvement with preschoolers came fully a decade later? And why has that University of Chicago playgroup, organized in 1916, gained the distinction of being the first co-op nursery school while the earlier Northside Cooperative Nursery School in Pasadena is unknown?

Historians recognize that multiple primary sources should be used in their research, but even in the statements of those individuals who are their subjects or were involved with establishing an educational system we sometimes find that there are inaccuracies or different interpretations of the same happening. This is true in all areas of investigation. For example, with current speculations about our upcoming El Niño season, it is relevant to note that ship captains and explorers have provided vital data about this cyclic phenomenon since the 1500s. A team of geophysicists recently pointed out that a widely quoted 1925 paper about heavy rainfall in 1763 was "spurious" and then devoted themselves to "setting the record straight" through tracing it back to a paper published in Lima in 1894 that contained errors and omitted sources of information. Subsequent writers not only plagiarized this paper, but altered those portions that didn't fit into their own hypotheses.[3] And these tactics are not new, according to authors of recent books. Religion is a favorite target. Several recent books provide evidence that the Ten Commandments of Moses were originally the laws of Hammurabi's code, for example, and were developed by Mises, a Syrian. Burton Mack uses a subtitle for his Who Wrote the New Testament? that hints of its contents - The Makings of the Christian Myth.[4] Norman Mailer tried to set New Testament history straight by writing it as an autobiography of Jesus.[5] A new periodical, The Barnes Review, is dedicated to correcting popular fallacies, phantasies, and egregious prevarications. Quoted in their recent promotional letter is

[3] William H. Quinn, Victor T. Neal, and Santiago E. Antunez de Mayola, "El Niño Occurrences Over the Past Four and a Half Centuries" in Journal of Geophysical Research, vol. 92, no C13, (Dec. 15,1987).(pp 14,455)

[4] Burton Mack, Who Wrote the New Testament? HarperCollins, 1996.

[5] Norman Mailer, The Gospel According to the Son. Random House, 1997.

Rousseau's statement that "Falsification of history has done more to impede human development than any one thing known to mankind."

To clarify what I mean by the title, here are some definitions, each with an example from outside early childhood history and a brief illustration from our own area.

> *Fallacy: A deceptive, misleading, erroneous or false notion, belief, etc. Any reasoning failing to satisfy the conditions of logical proof or violating the laws of valid argument.*

An example from a related professional discipline has affected many of us. Because they don't know the history of Home Economics, it is the fallacious belief of many feminist writers and academic administrators that the organization was started by some fuddy-duddy females who merely concerned themselves with stewing and sewing. The American Home Economics Association was formally organized in either 1908 or 1909 but the decision was made on New Year's Eve and nobody noticed which side of midnight it was finalized on. Typical of the thinking at that meeting was a statement by Ellen Richards, the newly elected president. She believed that "A great step in humaniculture is made when people from different sections agree on the fundamental child and his needs. It is evident that the beginning must be made early and that each step must follow a well placed previous one in order that time be not wasted and lessons contradicted." And a Mrs. Abel suggested that urban women needed, "First, a laundry operated by experts where no injurious and destructive chemicals will be used; second, a cook shop, or a public kitchen, in which the basis of the meal can be bought ready cooked."[6] Those early home economists were pioneering biochemists, physicists, and social scientists - in addition to their role as activists who worked to get colleges opened to women students. However, even with the new 21st Century nomenclature of Family and Consumer Sciences, Home Ec "just don't git no respect." Those of us affiliated with these departments know the result.

The history of early education reveals so many fallacies that it is hard to choose one. Because our public schools provide kindergarten for the year a child becomes five years old,

[6] Jl. of Home Economics, Vol 1, no 1 (February 1909). pp. 1, 36, 45.

there is a common belief that Froebel kindergartens of the mid-1800s were for that age group, rather than for toddlers to six- or seven-year-olds. A hundred years ago, there was a fallacious belief that the Froebel materials were for use with all children in the kindergarten, disregarding Froebel's intent to begin with stimulation of the infant mind. The colored balls of the First Gift, for example, were designed for mothers to use with mere babes. In many American kindergartens, they were swung in a rote fashion by a circle of bored five-year-olds. This rigid curriculum emphasizing sequenced "Gifts and Occupations" materials, sold by Milton Bradley and other manufacturers from the 1870s onward, was based upon a book written by a young gymnastics teacher named Goldammer who had gotten his information from a French manual - and then had "improved" upon Froebel's system. St. Louis kindergarten pioneer Susan Blow wrote from Europe in 1877 that "the man is a humbug and an ignoramous. ... He has so mixed the good, which he has stolen from the French Manual, with his own absurdities, that the influence of his book can only be injurious.[7]

It is a fallacious belief that Froebel was a humble village school teacher who merely adopted Pestalozzi's idea of children learning through play. If we read some of the older books about him, or talk with the historians who have actually read his letters and publications in the Berlin archives, we find that he was a scientist who had attended fine universities at Jena and elsewhere. Heineman's 1893 publication of some of Froebel's letters shows that he was correlating detailed developmental observations of infants and young children in a style much like that of Piaget. Marginal notes in his library books, which ranged from Aristotle and Rousseau to the controversial writers of his day, indicate that he not only read about their ideas but responded with his own.[8] Those who would gain by "putting down" both Home Economics and the Froebelian kindergarten are partially responsible, but perpetuation of fallacious beliefs is sometimes just due to inadequate research on the part of historians writing about early childhood education.

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[7] Letter from Susan Blow to Elizabeth Peabody, published in Kindergarten Messenger, 1897. pp 93-94

[8] Arnold H. Heinemann. Froebel Letters. Lee and Shepard, 1893.

Phantasy:

Unreal or illusory representation of a real object or personage, especially when extravagant and unrestained; a daydream; a visionary or utopian idea.

Our phantasies about the respectable Victorian household are shattered when we read carefully documented accounts of what really happened in the middle-class families of the late nineteenth century. One source is Steven Kern, who revealed the terror induced by new concepts of cultural, infectious and hereditary transmission from parents to children. If one parent had syphilis, for example, it was assumed that the children would be syphilitic. At the same time, the kindly way for a husband to protect his wife from unintended pregnancies was through the services of prostitutes or domestic servants to satisfy his masculine needs. Kern attributed the high rate of child suicide during these times to the fear of punishment and the misery of home life.[9]

There are many examples of phantasies from the early years of the kindergarten, although the Froebelians who came from central Europe were acquainted with the ideas of Comenius, Pestalozzi, and other educational philosophers and were inclined to be more pragmatic. For example, at the first national meeting of the Friends of Froebel in 1881, it was Swiss-educated William Hailmann who criticized the "foolish exaggerations and extravagant claims of the overenthusiastic friends who have done much to injure our cause." He continued this message until his death in 1920, in his publications, his lectures, and his college classes.[10]

Kindergarten advocates clearly had a phantasy when they visualized families reformed and communities restructured through the music and games of their young children. Susan Blow, labeled as a "conservative" in later years, wrote that "The kindergarten has its own peculiar form of fetish-worship. It consists in attributing a magic power to Froebel's gifts and games, and in expecting blocks and balls, songs and gestures to

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[9] Steven Kern, "Explosive Intimacy: Psychodynamics of the Victorian Family" History of Childhood Quarterly Vol 1, no. 3 (Winter 1974) pp 437-461

[10] Dorothy W. Hewes, W. N. Hailmann: Defender of Froebel. Doctoral Dissertation, Union Graduate School, 1974. Xerox University Microfilm, # 75-15, 939.

do the work which can only be accomplished by human insight and devotion .... Most of the nature games in the Mother Play are presentations to the phantasy of childhood which have nourished the spriritual life of childlike men."[11]

Egregious Prevarication:

A deliberate misleading statement that is remarkable or extraordinary in a negative sense. (From the Latin term praedricari, meaning to walk as if straddling.)

My example from outside our field comes from the first paragraph of Bernstein and Politi's biography of Pope John Paul II. "On September 29, 1978, life in the Apostolic Palace was thrown into utter disarray. On August 26, the College of Cardinals had met at the Vatican and chosen the successor to Paul VI, 65-year-old patriarch of Venice who took the name John Paul I. Everything seemed settled for years to come. However, Sister Vincenza had entered the pope's bedroom a little after 5 a.m. She was accustomed to leaving a cup of coffee just outside the pope's bedroom door every morning at 4:30. When she saw that it hadn't been touched, she became alarmed. So she went inside and pulled back a curtain.

John Paul I was curled up in a reading positon, clutching, even in death, a handful of papers, his face stiffened into a half-smile. Then, at 7:42 a.m., Vatican Radio announced the pope's death - but the story contained an Egregious Prevarication. To reveal that Sister Vincenza had seen the dead pope in his pajamas was unthinkable. The Vatican had issued strict instructions: the world could not be told that a woman was the first person to enter the pontiff's bedroom. Thus the official version was that one of the pope's male secretaries had discovered the body."[12]

I find it intriguing that various accounts of Friedrich Froebel's deathbed statements also display egregious prevarication, even though they supposedly quote individuals who were there when he took his last breath. Although his Lutheran minister father preached that God had put man on

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[11] Susan E. Blow, "The Mother Play and Nursery Songs" in Henry Barnard's Papers on Froebel's Kindergarten. American Journal of Education, 1890. pp 575-594.

[12] Bernstein, Carl and Marco Politi. (1996). His Holiness, John Paul II and the Hidden History of Our Time. Doubleday. p.1

earth to have dominion over all creatures great and small, Froebel believed that everything in the universe, organic and nonorganic, was inter-related. One little known explanation for this approach was his lifelong fascination with Asian religions, which started at age 17 when he read a German translation of Zoroastrian scriptures, the Zendavesta.[13] Matilde Kriege, a friend of Froebel's young widow, was probably reporting accurately when she wrote in the first English-language biography of Froebel that his last days were spent in contemplation and that he died in his sleep.[14] Other accounts quote him reassuring his wife and friends by saying "I shall hover over you" Yet Bowen's version and several others have him piously intoning "God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."[15] Some add "Amen" as the finale. Their biographies are based upon the accounts provided by Middendorff, Froebel's lifelong colleague, who had studied theology and had remained a devout Lutheran. I believe that this emphasis upon Protestant Christianity was a deliberate public relations strategy, an egregious prevarication that would nullify the accusations that Froebel was a pantheist or an atheist. Because of these accusations, the Prussian government had recently ordered that all kindergartens were to be closed. Froebel's supporters felt that the future of the system depended upon this final declaration of conventional faith.

This tactic was effective. Although they have often considered his ideas "mystical" or difficult to comprehend, American writers have consistently mentioned that Froebel was religious. In her 1997 textbook for administrators, for example, Barbara Taylor quoted Braun and Edwards as stating that Froebel was a deeply religious man and his "mission was to demonstrate the unity of God's creations in both the *gifts* and the *occupations*."[16] Without understanding that this was a pantheistic religion, much like that of our American Indians or of many other non-Christian beliefs, it is misunderstood.

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[13] Helmut König, Friedrich Fröbel, 1782–1852. Volk un Wissen Volkseigener Verlag (Berlin), 1982. p 6

[14] Matilde H. Kriege. Friedrich Frœbel E. Steiger (New York), 1876.

[15] H. Courthope Bowen, Froebel and Education Though Self-Activity. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909.

[16] Barbara J. Taylor, Early Childhood Program Management. Prentice Hall, 1997. p 384

Egregious Prevarication for Individual Glorification

In some cases, egregious prevarications have provided individuals with prestige and security even though some colleagues suspected their duplicity. For example, recent biographies of Bruno Bettelheim have documented his true origins as distinguished from those that he carefully perpetuated about himself. He was not a psychiatrist and had not trained at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute, but had been an art major with a Ph.D. in aesthetics and only three courses in general psychology. Although he gained public acclaim and was well known for his popular books (which included extensive sections that were plagiarized), he was never accepted into membership in the American Psychoanalytic Association.[17]

In early childhood history, Elizabeth Peabody's introduction to Froebel's ideas provides us with a "case" that is well known. It merges fantasies, phallasies, and egregious prevarications. She truly was a vital force in establishing the Froebelian kindergarten in the United States, but recent writers have tended to glorify her contribution. What really happened, I believe, is described in a letter written by Peabody to Henry Barnard in 1879, when he was preparing to reprint articles from his American Journal of Education. She traced the American kindergartens to articles published in his journal in 1856 and 1858, and to a 1859 review of "Le Jardin des Enfants" in the Christian Examiner. She described several attempts to start kindergartens during the next decade as "ignorant" and "inadequate" - including her own "unfortunate" premature attempt. She admitted that it was not until she went to Europe in 1867 to see "the real thing" that there were genuine kindergartens.[18] This is essentially the same version that Nina Vandewalker included in her 1908 history of the kindergarten.[19]

The egregious prevarication concerns another source for Peabody's interest in the kindergarten. Since 1972, many of us have been familiar with the cover illustration used by ACEI for Dauntless Women in Childhood Education. It pictures Elizabeth Peabody shaking hands with little Agathe Schurz, while mother Margarethe looks on. This "fateful meeting" in 1859 supposedly

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[17] Probably the most critical and most painstaking in its research is Richard Pollak's The Creation of Dr. B: A Biography of Bruno Bettelheim. Simon & Schuster, 1997.

[18] Elizabeth Peabody, "Letter" reprinted in Henry Barnard, Papers on Froebel's Kindergarten, 1881. p 10

[19] Nina Vandewalker. The Kindergarten in American Education. Macmillan, 1908.

took place in Boston. The ACEI account is based upon an article written by Elizabeth Peabody in 1882.[20] In it, Peabody describes how she had complemented Mrs. Schurz upon Agathe's "remarkable behavior" and was told that it was because the child had been brought up in a kindergarten. Peabody had spent most of her fifty-five years involved with various educational programs, and this encounter made her determined that all American children should have the same benefit.[21] In a slightly different version, Evelyn Weber recognized that Henry Barnard's article had "aroused her interest" and that "a chance meeting with Mrs. Carl Schurz in 1859 fanned this interest into a flame of enthusiasm." After the preface to Froebel's *Education of Man* was was sent to her by Mrs. Schurz, she hastened to open the Boston kindergarten in 1860.[22] The result was described by Ross as The Kindergarten Crusade. In another version, Ross acknowledged that Barnard's *Kindergarten and Child Culture Papers* had been "extremely valuable" in acquainting the American educators with Froebel's ideas. She perpetuated the myth by describing how "Elizabeth Peabody first heard about the kindergarten system in 1859 from Margarethe Meyer Schurz at the Boston home of a mutual friend. At this meeting, Peabody was fascinated as Margarethe Schurz explained some of Friedrich Froebel's precepts and described her own experiences in kindergartning. ... She followed up the conversation by sending Peabody the preface to Froebel's *Education of Man*, available at that time only in the original German."[23]

How have recent historians dealt with the origins of the Froebel kindergarten in the United States? Most textbook writers have avoided lengthy explanations. For example, David Day allotted Peabody one sentence in the introductory chapter of his 1983 textbook that was described as a "human ecological approach" to ECE. After a paragraph about Mrs. Carl Schurz setting a pattern for German immigrants with her 1856 kindergarten, he simply stated that "Elizabeth Peabody, a

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[20] R. M. Baylor. Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Kindergarten Pioneer. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965. p 35

[21] A. Snyder. Dauntless Women in Childhood Education, 1856-1931. Association for Childhood Education International, 1972. p 31.

[22] Evelyn Weber. The Kindergarten - Its Encounter with Educational Thought in America. Teachers College Press, 1969. p 25

[23] Elizabeth Dale Ross, The Kindergarten Crusade: The Establishement of Preschool Education in the United States. Ohio University Press, 1976. p 2

reform-minded educator and idealist from Boston, met Mrs. Schurz in 1859 and opened her own kindergarten in 1860."[24] In none of these accounts was it mentioned that Froebel had written Education of Man in the early 1820s, before he had recognized the importance of the preschool years.[25] The first kindergarten had not been established until 1836 or 1839 or 1840, depending upon the criteria used for determining the date. It laid out Froebel's beliefs about the education of older children, but he had not yet recognized the importance of the early years. Peabody read only the preface, but the entire book would not have served as a reliable guide, as she recognized within a few years. Her trip to Europe introduced her to the series of Gifts and Occupations as they had been standardized by Luise Froebel and others who carried on the work started by "The Father of the Kindergarten."

Individuals from outside early education have tended to use different sources from those whin the field, and have been more accurate. One example is the biographical sketch of Margarethe Meyer Schurz published in Notable American Women, which tactfully labels Peabody's account "an exaggerated claim ... which is inspirational, not factual."[26] Robert Downs, a librarian whose 1978 biography of Froebel was the fourth in his series about great educators, described the enthusiasm of Henry Barnard after viewing the London exhibition in 1854. "His writings inspired Elizabeth Palmer Peabody to open a kindergarten in Boston, though she lacked firsthand training or experience in the field."[27] I believe that architect Norman Brosterman's intensively researched new book, Inventing Kindergarten, is the clearest and most accurate explanation of the Froebelian system ever published in English. He questioned many of the common beliefs about nineteenth century happenings, but made an intriguing error. I was mystified to read that "In 1860, Elizabeth Peabody had opened America's first English-speaking kindergarten ... after meeting Margarethe

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[24] David Day. Early Childhood Education - A Human Ecological Approach. Scott, Foresman and Company, 1983. pp 22-23.

[25] The version available to Margaretha Schurz was Die Menschenerziehung. : Verlaug der Astalt (Keilhau), 1826. English translations by Josephine Jarvis in 1885 and William Hailamann in 1887.

[26] Edward T. James, Notable American Women, III. Belknap Press, 1971. pp 242-3 Jonathan Messerli, author of this sketch, listed source as E. P. Peabody, "The Origin and Grown of the Kindergarten" in Education, May-June 1882.

[27] Robert B. Downs. Friedrich Froebel. Twain Publishers, 1978. p 93

Schurz's clever little son in Roxbury, Massachusetts."[28] A son? In Roxbury? I found the source of his statement in the biographical section of The Paradise of Childhood. More than a century ago, a normal school lecturer named Blake wrote in the history section of that kindergarten guide that "Miss Peabody was a teacher, a lecturer, and an author, devoting her life to educational and philanthropic matters. Her attention was first directed to the kindergarten in 1859, because of the peculiar brightness of a little boy of her acquaintance, the son of Carl Schurz, whose family were then living at Roxbury, Mass., and who, she was told, had been taught in a German kindergarten. Miss Peabody began at once to study the writings of Froebel and in 1860 she opened a kindergarten."[29] (He also quoted Peabody's statement that she went to Europe in 1857 with eleven hundred dollars in gold, which she had made by giving lectures on the philosophy of history. Her funds primarily came from the donations of friends, but that's another story.)

How did the egregious prevarication about the meeting with Agathe Schurz originate? We might attribute it to Peabody's faulty memory, since she wrote the erroneous account in 1882, when she was 78 years old and had switched her primary concerns from the kindergarten to the welfare of the Piute Indians.[30] However, because she had been maneuvering around the truth at other times in her long life, I suspect that she deliberately made up the false account because of the new prestige attained by Carl Schurz, who by this time had served as a U.S. senator and had recently retired as Secretary of the Interior. Schurz had become active in Republican politics soon after emigrating to the United States as a political refugee in 1852. Carl and Margarethe Schurz had moved to Wisconsin, where they settled into their newly built Watertown house in the fall of 1856. The home playgroup for their two daughters and four cousins, opened by Margarethe that fall, remains the first kindergarten of record in the United States.[31] Carl became active in the organization of the Republican party by the end of that year and travelled a great

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[28] Norman Brosterman. Inventing Kindergarten. Henry Adams, 1997. p 139

[29] Henry W. Blake, Life of Friedrich Froebel. Part III of Edward Wiebé, Paradise of Childhood. Milton Bradley Company, 1896/1921. p 265

[30] Elizabeth Peabody, "Origin and Growth of the Kindergarten" in Education, II:5 (May 1882). p 523.

[31] Waterton (Wisconsin) Daily Times, Centennial Edition, August 24, 1956. p 4. There were probably others in Texas, Minnesota, and other states where Germans took refuge after their aborted 1848 revolution.

deal to promote its then-radical ideas. On April 18, 1859, he spoke at Faneuil Hall in Boston on the topic of "True Americanism" and wrote home to his wife that the speech was highly praised. On the 29th, he spoke in Worcester and wrote home that he had met most of the distinguished writers and statesmen of New England.[32] We can be assured that Elizabeth Peabody, always eager to be at the forefront of emerging concepts, was at one or both of these events - but that six-year-old Agathe and her mother were at home. Since Froebel and Schurz were both German and she was aware of the kindergarten origins, it is probable that Peabody engaged him in a conversation that ended with his promise that he'd have his wife send some information.

A related example of distortion can be found in The Peabody Sisters of Salem. Louise Hall Tharp wrote at length about Peabody's 1867-68 trip to Europe. Among the numerous factual errors, the Baroness von Bülow was described as a "pupil of Fröbel" although she was actually his patroness. She refers to a letter in which Peabody favorably described "'the transcendental Jews and their sympathizers, the friends of Carl Schurz. ... It goes without saying that Carl Schurz was a kindergartner, and so was his wife. They had come to America in 1852, formed a firm friendship with Miss Peabody in Boston, but established themselves in Wisconsin, where Mrs. Schurz had started a private kindergarten for her own children and their friends." Then Tharp casually notes that "On her way through England, Peabody established an English Froebel Society – just by way of getting her hand in before starting the Froebel Union in the United States."[33]

In 1984, I carefully read through the original "Minutes Book" in the archives of the Froebel Society for the Promotion of the Kindergarten System, at their headquarters in Roehampton, near London. The first one opens with the statement that "A preliminary meeting was held at 63 Kensington Gardens Square on Wednesday evening, Nov. 4th, 1874, for the purpose of forming a K.G. Association." Recall that Peabody was in England in 1868, six years earlier. These minutes confirm that the organization was started by German immigrants, trained in

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[32] Claude M. Moore. Carl Schurz, Reformer (1829-1906). Dodd, Meade & Co., 1932. Letters pp 63-65. See also Hans L. Trefousse, Carl Schurz: A Biography. Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1982.

[33] Louise Hall Tharp. The Peabody Sisters of Salem. Litttle, Brown and Company, 1950. p 323

Froebel's system, who had recently established kindergartens and training schools. Meetings were scheduled for the first Tuesday of every month, and dues were 5 shillings. On February 2, 1875, it was recorded that Froebel's widow, Louise Froebel, had accepted their invitation to be an honorary member. At this meeting, also, it was recorded that translations from Froebel were a problem because his writing was "difficult and involved in style" and needed to be translated by those "who have thoroughly mastered the subject and could render it into a form more (undecipherable word) to the English mind." The first reference to Elizabeth Peabody was at the regular Tuesday meeting of March 7, 1875, when it was merely noted that a letter had been received in which there was "an interesting account of the kindergartens in the United States." Again, on June 8, 1876, "A letter from Miss Peabody to Miss Heerwart was read, containing an encouraging account of the prospects in the United States and expressing great interest in the Fröbel Society." No comments were noted, and the meeting continued with a discussion of reading methods. Undated minutes for the summer of 1879 include a brief notation that "The Sec. was requested to furnish data for the information of an American meeting to be held shortly under Miss Peabody." Again, there were no further details and it was a minor item on their agenda. In her Kindergarten Messenger, published irregularly between 1873 and 1878, Peabody included reports from London which she credited with helping establish the American Froebel Union in 1878. However, I have found absolutely no evidence that she ever claimed to have assisted with the establishment of the London Society and believe that it was used by Tharp to build up the importance of her subjects.

Egregious Prevarication as an Organizational Tactic

Egregious prevarication can also be an effective ploy to bond members of a group together. As social anthropologists Gerlach and Hine expressed it, a kite flies best against the wind. They studied cases in which commitment was developed when more opposition was perceived by participants than seemed to exist objectively.[34] We can all look back to instances when groups rallied round in the face of opposition; when things go

[34] Luther P. Gerlach and Virginia H. Hine. People, Power, Change - Movements of Social Transformation. Bobb-Merrill, 1970.

smoothly, that cohesive sense of accomplishment may be lost. In trying to understand the origins of the cooperative nursery school movement, I found that this tactic was apparently used successfully by Katharine Whiteside Taylor in the 1950s and 1960s. The term "mushrooming" was frequently used to describe the development of cooperative nursery schools during these decades. Their propagation was apparently random, just as spores drifted on the wind to establish new "fairy rings" of mushrooms on grassy lawns. Participating mothers from Berkeley or Detroit or Baltimore moved to new locations when their husbands got jobs after college and carried the co-op idea with them. Beginning in the mid-1940s, these scattered parent groups and their teachers began to cluster together into local and regional councils. By the early 1950s, there was talk about forming a national association, and the organizing conference of the American Council of Parent Cooperatives was held in 1960. It acquired the more prestigious name of Parent Participation Preschools International (PCPI) in 1965.[35]

Katharine Whiteside Taylor claimed in several publications and in her 1971 interview with Libbie Byers that early plans for a national organization of the co-ops had to be dropped because of "serious opposition" by our own National Association for the Education of Young Children, at that time still called the National Association for Nursery Education (NANE).[36] Several former NANE presidents and board members have assured me that there had been no discrimination against members from cooperative nursery schools. A typical response was given by Jimmie Hymes, NANE president from 1945 to 1947, who pointed out that "We were such a weak and small and feeble organization. There could never have been any movement to keep anyone out – the great goal was to get someone in."[37] We should recall that NANE membership during the 1940s and 50s hovered between 100 and 500. By 1960, the year the national cooperative group organized, NANE had 47 affiliate groups and some independent members. Their fall board meeting report emphasized that "Membership continues to be of key concern,

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[35] Dorothy W. Hewes, "It's the Camaraderie" - A History of Parent Cooperative Nursery Schools. Center for Cooperatives, University of California at Davis, 1998.

[36] Libby Rhoda Byers, Origins and History of the Parent Coopeative Nursery School Movement in America. Doctoral Dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1973. pp 155-6 (Summary Biography of K.W. Taylor, ERIC ED 091063)

[37] Personal correspondence, James L. Hymes, Jr. to D. Hewes, March 2, 1995.

since all plans for increased growth and expansion depend upon an accompanying increase in the number of loyal members.[38]

One indication of the approach of NANE to the American Council of Parent Cooperatives was the invitation extended to them at their organizational meeting in 1960 to become an affiliate organization. NANE board minutes for October 22-27, 1962, show that this invitation had been accepted but it was announced at the November board meeting that "Carolyn Hawkins, National Cooperative Group, did not affiliate. The Michigan Council of Parent Cooperatives decided to affiliate with NANE."[39] Carolyn Hawkins, who had drawn up the by-laws for the co-op association and was their first elected president, was also a leader in the Michigan Council.

My search of NANE board minutes and other official records revealed no deliberate rejection but does indicate concern about the uncertain quality of cooperative preschools. As early as Fall 1952, Millie Almy's "Greetings from the New President" in the NANE *Bulletin* listed "Good education for both children and parents in the cooperative nursery school setting" as the third of five major concerns. The NANE conference planning committees recognized that a fast growing segment of its membership represented the directors and teachers of the co-op nursery schools. At the 1952 Executive Board meeting, the program for their conference in Minnesota the following November was discussed and it was agreed that "emphasis throughout" should be placed on parent cooperatives. Later in this same meeting, after Madelyn Siemann presented her report as Chairman of the Committee on Cooperative Nursery Schools, Theresa Mahler asked what other assistance was being given to assist the co-ops and was told that additional articles were scheduled to appear in the NANE *Bulletin*. Adjournment was postponed to permit more discussion of the 1953 convention, and it was recommended that incoming President Millie Almy appoint a fact-finding committee to determine just what co-op problems needed to be dealt with.[40] We should also note that one of the NANE board members was Polly McVickar, president of the California Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools. In the state newsletter, she wrote about the planned convention and

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[38] "NANE Board Meets in Chicago" in Journal of Nursery Education, XV:2 (Winter, 1960), p 62

[39] Edith Dowley, Affiliate Group Report, NANE Board Minutes, October 23, 1962.

[40] Minutes in NAEYC Archives, dated January 12, 1952.

said that "We hope a large number of our nursery school people will be able to attend and bring us a vivid report on the discussion of varous kinds of co-ops throughout the country. One of the topics to be covered will be parent-teacher relationships, which is of major concern to us in California from the viewpoint of training and standards for our nursery school teachers."[41]

There are recurring references to cooperative nursery schools in the NANE Minutes, although Katharine Whiteside Taylor seems not to have been recognized as their leader. Those for the October 1955 Business Meeting stated that "It was moved, seconded and passed ... that the Board take necessary steps to put a strengthened program into effect" to support the cooperative nursery schools. Minutes for the NANE Board meeting in November 1960 record that "Related to the Cooperative Nursery School Committee's area of concern was a discussion on NANE relationship with the American Council for Parents of Cooperative Preschools (sic). Cornelia Goldsmith represented NANE and corresponded at length with Dr. Kenneth Wann, who had spearheaded the organization of this group ... which met and organized August 22-23 in New York. The board feels NANE should maintain contact, encourage them, and respond to their requests for help by giving available assistance."[42] A year later, at the 1961 board meeting in Chicago, NANE relationships with the American Council for Parents of Cooperative Preschools were again discussed. I found it interesting to note that the individual being given credit for organizing the cooperatives was not Taylor but was the Teachers College professor that she has credited with assisting her in the process, since the minutes note again that Cornelia Goldsmith had "corresponded at length with Dr. Kenneth Wann, who spearheaded the organization of this group. NANE board feels NANE should maintain contact with the group, encourage them, and respond to their requests for help by giving available assistance."[43]

The NANE conferences consistently included workshops of particular interest to co-op teachers and directors. Myra Woodruff, the 1953 keynote speaker, recognized the "concern

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41 CCPPNS *Preschooler*, I:4. (September 1953). p 1.
42 National Association for Nursery Education, Minutes of Board Meeting, November 10-13, 1960. p 6
43 Minutes in NAEYC Archives, dated January 11-13, 1961.

about good education for children everywhere, whether it be in a child care center, a private school, a cooperative nursery school, or a kindergarten." She noted that the cooperative type of school "might be called a folk movement, since it has been developing without any particular push from professional educators, yet it has grown into a movement which holds the interest of all who are concerned about the education of young children. The potentialities of the cooperative nursery school, and the problems and difficulties which these schools face, make it important that all who are interested in young children keep close to this movement, find out more about it, stand ready to help."[44]

In preparation for the 1955 biennial conference in Boston, the planning committee mailed a questionnaire to its membership, asking what cooperative nursery schools in their area would find most interesting. Regardless of varied sponsorship – private, church, university, adult education, foundation, and recreation departments – their overwhelming concern dealt with adult inter-relationships. Acordingly, a panel of five authorities discussed that topic and there were seminars on "Parent-Teacher Communication" and "Ways of Studying Children in a Cooperative." One on "Group Planning and Standards" was led by Katharine Whiteside Taylor. All were summarized and reproduced for distribution.[45] Polly McVickar reported that this was "an exciting time. Exciting, first of all, because there were so many cooperative nursery school people present, teachers, directors, consultants, parents, and from so many different areas. Next, because everyone was so ready to share, to ask questions, and discuss. And, finally, because of a sense of the enormous stability in the growth of cooperative nursery schools."[46]

Inclusion of co-op membership in the conferences continued. For example, Peter Neubauer's 1961 keynote address had its focus upon the role of preschool teachers as mental health professionals. Carolyn Hawkins and Katharine Whiteside Taylor, invited members of the Reaction Group, presented techniques used in cooperative nursery schools to

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[44] Reprint of Woodruff's presentation on "The Cooperative Nursery School - A Significant Trend in Education" as presented at the NANE Biennial Conference, October 1953 (Pacific Oaks Archives).

[45] Reported in NANE *Bulletin*, Winter 1956, pp 37-38.

[46] CCPPNS *Preschooler*, 3:3 (December 1955). p 3.

involve parents in the mental health of their families and suggested that co-ops were setting an example for the rest of the field.[47]

Although NANE was already publishing materials for use by cooperative nursery schools, and was including relevant articles in their *Bulletin*, one the strategies Taylor used to develop her new organization was to start publication of a journal in 1958. She provided an impressive list of twenty-one associate editors, most of them university professors, but correspondence indicates that several of them had not been previously consulted about their willingness to serve. Through the years, Taylor insisted that NANE had been "pleading" for her to abandon the idea of forming an organization. I found that term in a 1957 letter written to her by Harriet Nash, 1954-55 NANE president. After explaining why she could not, "in good faith with NANE," accept an associate editor position on the co-op publication, Nash wrote "I would like to make the plea that you seriously reconsider your present plan and study the many ways in which this effort could be channeled through NANE. The world is so full of so many publications and associations that I feel we could greatly strengthen all of our work by uniting and cooperating in providing constructive services to teachers, children, and parents."[48]

Was Katharine Whiteside Taylor justified in claiming that there was opposition to the parent cooperatives? Rhoda Kellogg's popular 1949 textbook, Nursery School Guide, stated that "the coöps" were undesirable at best, and an actual detriment to children at worst. While parent education was important, their children would suffer by having constantly changing amateur assistant teachers and when parent-teacher conflicts emerged. Besides, parents were entitled to evenings of entertainment, rather than meetings with unsuitable speakers, and those "most in need of enlightenment" would not be reached. Both parents and teachers needed psychiatric counseling more than anything else. To her credit, Kellogg favored "a good system of free public education" at the preschool level, with a separate program of parent education conducted by professionally qualified teachers having no other

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[47] *Digest*, 1961 Conference, National Association for Nursery Education, 9/18-21/61.

[48] Original carbon copy of letter dated November 15, 1957, in my personal files.

responsibilities.[49] But Kellogg was not representing NANE. Reviews published in their *Bulletin* questioned the rigidity of Kellogg's ideas and were supportive of the cooperative nursery schools. Articles published in the NANE *Bulletin* in 1950, 1951, and 1952, aired concerns about "amateur" participants in the classroom. Katharine Read wondered about young children's ability to share their mothers and questioned whether many mothers could handle the double roles of parent and teacher.[50] Dorothy Barclay's *New York Times* critique of Read's article was reprinted in the *Bulletin* the following summer.[51] This was followed by comments by Alma Armbruster of Cleveland and Annavieve Abrams of Maryland, who indicated that Read's concerns were valid but they then described how these problems had been met in their local nursery schools.[52]

In her "Fiftieth Anniversary History" in 1966, Taylor repeated the statement that "It was feared by some when the American Council of Parent Cooperatives was formed that it might drain potential membership and strength from the National Association for Nursery Education." However, she asserted, "Through participation in the section on parent cooperatives (in NANE), and through personal encounters with its Journal Editor, Cornelia Goldsmith, mutual collaboration evolved."[53] In her 1981 edition of *Parents and Children Learn Together*, she wrote that "The NAEYC and the PCPI are parallel and complementary organizations."[54]

While Katharyn Whiteside Taylor wrote a rather egocentric history of the cooperative nursery schools, others have added details that she never claimed. For example, she could have had nothing to do with the establishment of the University of Chicago Cooperative in 1916, since she did not graduate from the University of Wisconsin with an English degree until 1919. She joined the Berkeley Women's Club about 1922, while her husband

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[49] R. Kellogg, Nursery School Guide, Houghton Mifflin, 1949. Quotes p 311. Reviews appeared in the NANE Bulletin 5:2 (Winter 1950). pp 16-21.

[50] K.H. Read, "What About Cooperative Nursery Schools:" in NANE Bulletin, V:1 (Fall 1950), pp 36. Her approach to early childhood education can be found on the "In Memorium" page of *Young Children*, 47:3 (March 1992). p 33 and pp 4-5.

[51] D. Barclay, "Nursery Educator Questions Co-ops" in NANE Bulletin, VI:4. pp 7-8.

[52] A. Armbruster, "What About Parent-Cooperative Preschool Groups?" and A. Abrams, "The Cooperative Nursery Schools Answer" in NANE Bulletin, VII:2, pp 5-16.

[53] K. W. Taylor. Fiftieth Anniversary History of the Parent Cooperative Movement. Mimeographed report distributed at annual conference of Parent Participation Preschools International, 1966.

[54] K.W. Taylor. Parents and Children Learn Together. Teachers College Press, 1981. p 327-9.

was a graduate student, and her introduction to early education came when their Women's Club instituted an AAUW Child Study group that year. She joined as a mother in 1925. However, when Taylor was inducted into the Cooperative Hall of Fame, in April of 1966, a plaque bearing her portrait and a brief biographical sketch was mounted at the headquarters of the National Cooperative Business Association in Washington, D.C. It states for posterity that "As early as 1916 she pioneered the start of a cooperative preschool as a member of the American Association of University Women."

Although Katharyn Whiteside Taylor was not involved in its organization, there is still an egregious prevarication behind the belief that "faculty wives" at the University of Chicago started the first parent-initiated cooperative nursery school is. When a few mothers couldn't afford nursemaids in 1915, they took turns watching their children at Scammon Gardens, on the campus. When cold weather came, they were allowed to use an empty women's gymnasium on campus. Two years later, a house was purchased adjacent to the campus, the school incorporated, elected a board of directors, and contracted with the university for janitorial services and utilities. Mothers still participated, but home economics students planned and cooked lunch and student teachers observed and participated.[55]

America's first nursery school to be designated as a *cooperative* appears to have been operating in Pasadena during the 1915-16 school year, an outgrowth of Mothers Clubs that had been popularized by the Congress of Mothers, precurser of the PTA. There are numerous references to these Mothers Clubs, with some providing informal but supervised play groups for children during educational programs about parenting.

William Hailmann, after over half a century in the progressive kindergarten movement, was a faculty member of Broadoaks Kindergarten Training School in Pasadena from 1907 until his death in 1920. In his personal papers at the UCLA Research library, I discovered a clipping from the Pasadena*Star* dated Thursday, March 23, 1916. It reported that "Fifty mothers and their children attended the informal meeting yesterday afternoon at the Northside Cooperative Nursery, when

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[55] Quote from E.O. Eaton, "The Chicago University Cooperative Nursery School." *Journal of Home Economics*, 16:8 (1924), pp 646-647. The Chicago Cooperative Nursery School is described as the first American cooperative in the 28th Yearbook of NSSE (1929), pp 27-28.

Dr. Llewella Merrow gave a most helpful talk on the care of young people and Miss Persons read a paper on the Montessori system."[56]

Archival records in the Pasadena Public Library provided an earlier front page article in the *Star* of August 23, 1915. It was headlined "Co-operating in the Care of Children. Morton Avenue Still in Van of Progressivism With This Modern Idea." Below, a smaller headline said "Mrs. F. P. Hooker and others active in work of unique interest" and the introductory paragraph described "the cooperative care of children" that had originated the previous year. It was noted that mothers "divided the work" rather than "just staying at home with their own children." Froebelian "kindergarten apparatus" was part of the program, and a parent library was well stocked. The Northside Cooperative Nursery was not listed in the Pasadena City Directory after 1916. Louise Hoocker, who held the school in her home, was a German-born public health nurse who had worked in east coast cities before marrying a labor union organizer and moving to Pasadena in 1911. Her 1973 obituary said that they had three daughters and a son, so this may have been her attempt to provide companions for them.[57]

The discovery of this previously unknown school indicates that perhaps others were established during this period but left no records for posterity. It is also likely that kindergartens were established by other German immigrants before 1856, when the Schurz children had a home-schooling Froebelian experience. The Schurz kindergarten and the University of Chicago Cooperative attained their status as "The First" because interested community groups publicized their origins. As early childhood historians, we should seek out other "firsts" and trace the true paths of their progress or failure.

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[56] Hailman Collection, UCLA Research Library, Box 1, Folder 1, with the date in his handwriting.

[57] Information from archives in the Pasadena Public Library was provided by Dan McLaughlin, 9/19/95.

Conclusion

Whether we are writing history, teaching history, or just enjoying it as an absorbing way to fill idle hours, it is imperative that we are aware of the fallacies, phantasies, and egregious prevarications that infiltrate accounts of past endeavors. This is not new. I will close with a relevant quotation from Thucydides of Athens ("The Father of History"), 410 B.C.

> I have not been content to follow casual informants or my own imagination. Where I have not been an eye witness myself, I have investigated with the utmost accuracy attainable every detail that I have taken at second hand. The task has been laborious, for witnesses of the same particular events have given versions that have varied according to their sympathies or retentive powers. Possibly the public will find my unromantic narrative forbidding, but I shall be satisfied if it is favourably received by readers whose object is exact knowledge of the facts.